responsible for the detailed exploration for minerals. The foreign Consultants are also engaged from time to time, if need be, for exploration of minerals. MECL is presently carrying out detailed exploration for copper around Khetri Copper deposit in Rajasthan. M/s Robertson Research, Australia and M/s Bishimetal Exploration Co. Ltd., Japan were engaged for carrying out of the detailed exploration for copper in Singhbhum copper belt in Bihar and Malanjkhand Copper belt in Madhya Pradesh respectively. HCL has conceived a plan to expand the capacity of its existing smelter at Khetri Copper Complex, Rajasthan from 31,000 tpa to 1 lakh tpa and also copper mines at Surda and Rakha in Eastern Region and Kolihan in Western Region to augment production of copper.

Expansion Programmes of Malanjkhand and Khetri Projects of HCL

190. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD : Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the public sector Hindustan Copper Limited has been scouting for overseas investors for its Malanjkhand and Khetri expansion projects;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the HCL plans have suffered a set-back due to import liberalisation and steep fall in internitional copper prices ; and

(c) if so, whether Government would consider lending HCL adequate budgetory support atleast for the proposed Malanjkhand integrated project for its being in the core industrial sector ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF MINES (SHRI BALRAM SINGH YADAV) : (a) and (b) Due to steep fall in international copper prices, the financial health of the Hindustan Copper Limited (HCL), the sole indigenous producer of primary copper in the country, has been affected. Therefore, the company has been looking for financial assistance for implementation of its various schemes. A review of expansion schemes indicates that the setting up of a smelter at Malanjkhand based on indigenous copper concentrates is not presently viable. However, expansion of existing Smelter at KCC with imported concentrates is considered economically viable and accordingly, this project has been assigned priority.

(c) In view of the reply in respect of Malanjkhand Copper Project given above question does not arise.

Investment by Multinational Companies in Minerals

191. MISS. SAROJ KHAPARDE : Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that multinational companies are keen on investing on minerals in India ; and

(b) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTERY OF MINES (SHRI BALRAM SINGH YADAV) : (a) and (b) The National Mineral Policy placed before this House on 5-3-1993 liberalises further the conditions pertaining to foreign investment in the mining sector has generated interest amongst foreign mining companies. Effect of these will show after consequential amendments to the Mines and Minerals (Regulation and Development) Act, 1957, have been made.

Illegal Mining of Precious Stones

192. SHRI G. G. SWELL : Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that large quantities of precious stones (cat's eye, garnet, rubies, diamonds) are being illegally mined in Koderma district of Bihar and Kalahandi and Bolangir districts of Orissa ;

(b) whether these precious stones found their way to Punjab, Rajasthan and abroad ; and

(c) whether it is also a fact that the Geological Survey of India failed to notice the existence of these precious stones in these districts, if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF MINES (SHRI BALRAM SINGH YADAV) : (a) Few instances of illegal excavation and smuggling of precious and semi-precious stones in the districts of Kalahandi and Bolangir of Orissa have come to notice of the State Government of Orissa during the last three years. Report of illegal mining of moon stone (cat's eye) has been received from Koderma area of Bihar by the State Government of Bihar.

(b) There is no restrictions on inter-state movement of precious stones.

(c) No, Sir.

Closure of Mica Mines in Bihar

193. SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA : Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state :

(a) what was the total number of mica mines in Bihar a decade ago ;

(b) whether it is a fact that a large number of MICA mines in Bihar and adjoining States have been lying closed since long ;

(c) the number of mica mines operational at present in Bihar ;

(d) whether Government have enquired into the reasons for their closure as well as the steps needed for their revival ; and

(e) if so, the details of measures both short-term and long-term being contemplated, if any, by Govenment for reviving the mica mines in Bihar and other areas ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF MINES (SHRI BALRAM SINGH YADAV) : (a) During 1982, there were 136 working mica mines in Bihar.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) At present, the number of working mica mines in Bihar is 50.

(d) Yes, Sir.

(e) The main reasons identified for closure of mica mines are : lack of demand in the international market, substitution of mica and its product, and the deeper mines becoming operationally viable.

Revival of this industry can be through production of value-added items like mica paper and mica based insulated materials, identification of new export markets for Indian mica and its products, technological improvement and diversification of mica and mica products.

"इस्को" का निजीकरण

194. **श्री शंकर दयाल सिंह** : क्या इस्पात मंत्री 6 अगस्त, 1993 को राज्य सभा में तारांकित प्रश्न 174 के दिए गए उत्तर को देखेंगे और यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि :

(क) सरकार द्वारा "इस्को" बर्नपुर के निजीकरण के मामले में अब तक आगे क्या कार्यवाही की गयी है, और

(ख) क्या कुछ व्यक्तियों/संगठनों द्वारा "इस्को" के निजीकरण के विरोध का प्रयास किया जा रहा है, और यदि हां, तो उसका ब्यौरा क्या है ?

इस्पात मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री (संतोष मोहन देव) : (क) यह मामला अभी सरकार के विचाराधीन है ।

(ख) विभिन्न केन्द्रीय श्रमिक संगठनों ने "इस्को" में निजी भागीदारी का विरोध किया है । अगस्त, 1993 में पश्चिम बंगाल राज्य विधानसभा का एक सर्वदलीय शिष्ट-मंडल इस्पात मंत्री से मिला और उसने मांग की कि "इस्को" का आधुनिकीकरण स्टील अथॉरिटी ऑफ इंडिया लिमिटेड (सेल) द्वारा निजी भागीदारी के बिना किया जाए ।

Closure of Mini Steel Plant

195. SHRI P. UPENDRA : Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state :

(a) whether a large number of mini steel plants have recently been closed down due